doi: 10.2143/ANES.44.0.2022825 *ANES* 44 (2007) 50–65

Jesus and Ḥusayn Ibn ʿAlī Ibn ʾAbū Ṭālib: A Comparative Study

Khalid SINDAWI

Department of Multidisciplinary Studies
The Max Stern Academic College of Emek Yezreel
Emek Yezreel 19300
ISRAEL
Fax: + 972 4 6980667
E-mail: Sindawe@017.net.il

Abstract

The paper provides a comparative analysis of the figure of Christ as depicted in the New Testament and that of Ḥusayn as reflected in Shīʿite literature. We show that both figures meet in nearly every respect the expectations from saintly figures: Ḥusayn like Jesus was born after a miraculous pregnancy and his birth was accompanied by visions and prophecies; both Ḥusayn and Jesus had supernatural powers and knowledge, such as prescience; both performed numerous miracles; both demonstrated moral authority and courage; both gave their lives for the sake of humanity and died for their faith; and both came to life again after their death and ascended to heaven, to abide in God's lap.[*]

Preface

A reader of the biography of Ḥusayn Ibn ʿAlī, the grandson of the prophet Muḥammad, (d. 680), especially the latter events of his life, will discover considerable a considerable number of similarities between Ḥusayn's background and characteristics and those of other great prophets and apostles, from among the reader's own people and among other peoples as well.

The Shīʿa's[1] authors sought similarities between Ḥusayn and his grandfather the prophet on one hand, and between him and the prophets of other

[*] I am indebted to Prof. J. Sadan, Prof. G. Kanazi and Dr. Aviva Broushi for their helpful comments on this article.

[1] Shīʿa and Shīʿī refer throughout this article to Imāmī (Twelver) Shīʿism.

religions, that would emphasize his sainthood. A saint is supposed to represent the perfection of human qualities: he is, simultaneously, a great general, a messenger from on high, a seer foretelling the future and a miracle worker. The Shīʿite authors were influenced by Jesus' biography, finding in it all the necessary attributes characterizing the likeness of a saint; they chose certain details from his life and introduced them into their compositions, altering them to suit their audience and dressing them in Shīʿite Islamic style.

This article will focus on the outstanding characteristics of the saint, such as miraculous birth, superior moral qualities, supernatural abilities, ability to work miracles and to see the future, and self sacrifice and martyrdom. In all these categories there are great similarities between Jesus the Christian savior and Ḥusayn, the Moslem ʾimām.

The Twelve ʾImāms

Before we open the discussion of Ḥusayn's character, let us note that the phenomenon of bestowal of a holy nature on the great men of Islam is not new. The Shīʿites believe that their ʾimāms, including Ḥusayn, are the successors of the prophets, and stress the continuity of prophecy in order to transmit *waṣiyya* (testament) from the prophets to the ʾimāms in a continuous dynasty. The prophets include ʾĀdam (Adam), Noah, ʾIbrāhīm (Abraham), Mūsa (Moses), ʿĪsā (Jesus) and Muḥammad.

The ʾimāms are considered to possess the divine prophetic testament of the early prophets which was transmitted to Muḥammad as well when his time came to appear as a prophet. In this context the Shīʿa sees the ʾimāms as part of the eternal dynasty of the chosen who appeared continuously in the world since Adam. Each in his own generation carried the spiritual-prophetic testament and passed it on to his successors before his death. This dynasty, the earliest of whom are the forefathers of the world, and which includes the prophets, their students and their disciples, preserves the continuity from one prophet to the next. According to Shīʿite understanding, this dynasty continues from Muḥammad to the last of the prophets; their heirs, Muḥammad's successors, are the Shīʿite ʾimāms.

The ʾimāms are endowed with supernatural abilities, they are of a higher order than ordinary men, they perform miracles, they know all the holy books and are familiar with hidden lore. Some of the ʾimāms' knowledge originates with the prophets and was received from them directly; other knowledge was acquired by the ʾimāms by reading secret writings or from dreams through which angels' words were transmitted; more reached the

'imāms from the stories of the Children of Israel, and from the Old and New Testaments. Thus the 'imāms' sources of knowledge are many and varied and includes all the secrets of the world. They are obligated to continue to transmit this heritage from 'imām to 'imām.[2]

The route of transmission of the *waṣiyya*[3] from one 'imām to the next is subject to continuous divine providence. Moreover, God transmits the secrets of the universe to these chosen since the time of creation and until Judgement Day.

How the Image of a Saint is Shaped

The authors of the Shī'a thus found in the stories of the prophets a broad area from which to draw exceptional characteristics to bestow upon the Shī'ite 'imāms. For this purpose they created a new literary genre, 'Proofs of the *'Imāma*,' (*Dalā'il al-'Imāma*) whose main purpose was to endow the great personalities of Islam with characteristics of prophets and saints. Ḥusayn Ibn 'Alī falls into this category.

With respect to Jesus Christ, an extensive literature was created around his life and death, his vocation, and his suffering, starting from fragments appearing in Flavius Josephus's works, subsequent expansion and development of the Epistles of Paul – the earliest documents of Christian literature – and culminating in the canonical Evangels and the works of the church fathers.[4]

The canonical Evangels were not written as historical documents but rather in order to spread and strengthen the new faith, as is evidenced by its name ('Evangel' means Gospel). Similarly, 'Proofs of the *'Imāma*,' written for the purpose of glorifying the 'imāms and attributing to them abilities of prophets, commonly with no connection to, or even contradicting, historical fact.

Another literature to be considered is hagiography, which played a significant role in the spiritual and intellectual life of the Middle Ages. To a certain extent the roots of our literature can be found in hagiography, which exists to this day in folk literature.[5] This literature possesses unique elements, such as:

[2] Al-Majlisī 1983, p. 23:273.

[3] On *waṣiyya* (testament) see for example: Amir-Moezzi 1994, pp. 41–43.
See also Al-Mas'ūdī 1954.

[4] More on Christian sources and non-Christian sources relating to Jesus Christ, see in Klausner 1999, pp. 86–99.

[5] Boyer 1988.

Place and time in hagiography are not defined, the story is universal and could have taken place in any place or time. Importance is placed only on the place in which the saint dies, or the location of relics. We will find that the literature that relates Ḥusayn's as well as Jesus' praises attributes supreme importance to the place and manner of death.

Moreover, the character of a saint is defined by uniform lines. The monk, the virgin the bishop and the ʾimām all fall into the same category. They display identical characteristics, and all that we know about them is their symbolic significance. The authors of hagiography model and refine their heroes, endowing them with superior qualities. Among the characteristics of the saints are

1. Origin – of a noble or important family;
2. Birth – usually accompanied by a miraculous event or prophecy;
3. Characteristics – the saint displays such qualities as righteousness, moral authority, courage, heroism, great wisdom;
4. An extraordinary event – sometimes death and resurrection;
5. Self-sacrifice and martyrdom;
6. His relics or remains play an important role among his followers;
7. The saint performs miracles both during his life and after his death.

Thus we see before us a regular and repeating scheme. Extraordinary events and exceptional moral qualities are essential elements of this literature. Various saints do the same things and behave in similar manner under similar circumstances. Even the miracles are identical, or at least very similar. The saint almost always finds his death through self-sacrifice.[6]

We will now examine the characteristics of Ḥusayn and of Jesus according to the scheme defining the saintly character described above.

Comparing Ḥusayn and Jesus

The central element through which the Shīʿites connect Jesus and Ḥusayn is that both are counted among the chosen and constitute outstanding models. We have therefore chosen to survey the similarities between the two according to the following characteristics:

1. Miraculous pregnancy and birth
2. Supernatural powers and performance of miracles
3. Premonition of the time and place of death
4. The manner of death
5. After death

[6] A slightly different and more interesting formula in defining the image of a saint can be found in Campbell book, 1956.

Miraculous Pregnancy and Birth

Stories about people born of the holy spirit are common among ancient peoples. Cupid was the son of the goddess Venus, Prometheus was the son of a god who descended from heaven to earth, Plato's mother was impregnated by the god Apollo before her husband knew her; several of the Roman caesars attributed their parentage to the gods, and if we visit the Far East we will find that at 600 BC, stories about Buddha are similar. An angel announced to the Buddha's mother that she would bear a son, and it is said of her that she became pregnant through the agency of the holy spirit;[7] and biblical messianic prophecies also suggest miraculous birth: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son …"[8]

Ḥusayn's birth was also strange and wonderful, and special signs foretell his advent. It is said that he was born only six months after his mother Fāṭima al-Zahrā' became pregnant, and his birth took place on *'Āshūrā'* Day. On precisely the same day, 57 years later, he was killed, on the 10th day of the month of *Muḥarram*, in the 61st year of the Hegira (10.10.680).

When the Virgin Mary was six months pregnant the angel Gabriel was sent to her to announce that she would give birth to Jesus:

> And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph … and the virgin's name was Mary … and the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest … then Mary said unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.[9]

Likewise Ḥusayn's mother, Fāṭima, daughter of the prophet, was a virgin when she gave birth to him![10]

Additional similarities: During Fāṭima's pregnancy with Ḥusayn the angel Gabriel revealed himself together with a thousand celestial angels to the prophet Muḥammad in order to congratulate him on the expected birth of his grandson Ḥusayn. On the day of Ḥusayn's birth, angels descended in ranks to extol and glorify his birth.

[7] Shaddai 2000, p. 30.
[8] Isaiah 7:14, King James Version.
[9] Luke 1:26–38.
[10] Ibn Ṭāwūs 1950, p.10; Al-Tustarī 1994, p. 369; Ayoub 1978, p. 35.

On Jesus' birthday, angels praising God descended from heaven to greet him.[11]

Mary the mother of Jesus is known as "the Immaculate Virgin," and the literature of the West praises her extravagantly. Shīʿite literature heaps praises upon Fāṭima, and it is told that in her virtues, piety and family's nobility she was outstanding among women, and that she devoted her life to God.[12]

An additional element is that God names the baby. When Gabriel announced Mary's pregnancy to her, he said, "Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus."[13] Jesus' name was thus chosen by God. In many places in Shīʿite literature it is mentioned that God gave Ḥusayn his name, and instructed his grandfather the prophet Muḥammad to call him by this name.[14]

Ḥusayn's birth, like Jesus', was thus a miraculous birth, a birth of true holiness, to a virgin mother, announced by special signs. This birth, befitting a model of a holy character, appears in stories about the two personalities.

To the miraculous pregnancy and birth can be added the motif of speech in the cradle.

It is said of Jesus that he spoke while still a babe in the cradle; Ḥusayn did not speak while an infant, but caused another infant to speak: in one of the traditions according to Ṣafwān Ibn Mahrān, it says: two people began arguing about the baby's paternity; each claimed that the baby was his son. Ḥusayn, who was passing by, heard the argument, addressed the baby and said to him, "Speak with permission of God, may he be praised." Then the baby opened its mouth and said, "I am not the son of either of these two; I am the son of a shepherd from such and such a tribe."[15]

Ḥusayn performs a miracle by causing the babe in its cradle to speak. We will therefore continue to the next point of comparison, dealing with miracles performed by Ḥusayn and Jesus.

Supernatural Powers and Performance of Miracles

Jesus and Ḥusayn are both known for the miracles that they performed. Ḥusayn worked miracles both during his life and after his death, through the agency of his decapitated head. Ḥusayn's head is able to speak, and in-

[11] Al-Tustarī 1995, p. 125.
[12] Ibn Namā 1899, p. 3; Luke 38:26; Qur'ān 19:45.
[13] Luke 1:31; Matthew 1:21.
[14] See for example: Al-Tustarī 1995, p. 126.
[15] Ibn Shahrāshūb 1991, 4:59.

fluences events around him after his murder. Jesus impresses both his believers and opponents by the miracles he performs. Let us take, for example, the miracle of healing by touching. The text of Matthew 9 relates:

> And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment. For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. But Jesus turned about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made the whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.[16]

Deliverance through touch appears also in the traditions about Ḥusayn. In this case the healer is the angel Fiṭris, who failed to perform the task commanded him by God, and as punishment his wings were broken and he was cast onto a deserted island.

When Ḥusayn was born, Fiṭris begged the angel Gabriel to bring him with him to congratulate the prophet Muḥammad on the birth of his grandson. Gabriel bore Fiṭris there, and when they arrived they told the prophet Fiṭris's story. The prophet said to him, "Touch the newborn babe." Fiṭris did so and immediately flew up to heaven; his wings were healed.[17]

Another supernatural characteristic is the light shining from them: "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."[18]

The term 'light' in the New Testament incorporates a messianic message and tidings of redemption. This message is evident in Jesus' words to his disciples:

> Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you … While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.[19]

It is said of Ḥusayn

> When God desired to create Ḥusayn, first He formed light, and then He formed soul, and from the mixture of light and soul Ḥusayn was created. Moreover, the light of Ḥusayn was created from the light of God.[20]

Light shone from Ḥusayn while he was still in his mother's womb. When Fāṭima became pregnant, her father the prophet said to her, "I see a light before your face; you will give birth to an 'imām of this nation." His

[16] Matthew 9:20–22.

[17] Al-Majlisī 1983, 40:249. It should be noted that the Shī'ite 'imāms were gifted with the power of healing by touching the sick. For example, see Al-Ṭabarī 1992, pp. 187, 190, 200, 213, 283, 341, 403, and 420.

[18] John 8:12; 12:46.

[19] John 1:9, 8:12, 12:35–36.

[20] Al-Tustarī 1995, p. 50, 100.

daughter answered, "Since I conceived I have had no need for a lamp to illuminate the darkness …"[21]

In both cases, the light bursting forth from them is a symbolic, metaphoric light meant to transmit a messianic message.

It should be noted that the motif of prophetic light is very common in religious literature in general and in Shīʿite literature in particular. Many stories can be found in Shīʿite sources about the light of ʾĀdam that glowed on the Seth's forehead, and about the garments of light given to him; likewise the pillar of light that appeared at the birth of ʾIbrāhīm, which aroused the amazement of the angels, is mentioned.

In Islamic tradition light constitutes one of the conspicuous signs of Muḥammad's prophecy and mission.[22] The expressions 'light' and 'true light' appear in the New Testament more than twenty times, showing us the importance of this prophetic symbol in Christian tradition.

Premonition of the Time and Place of Death

Ḥusayn, like the other ʾimāms according to Shīʿite tradition, knew the day of his death in advance, as well as the place of his murder and the manner of his death.[23] When Ḥusayn reached Karbalā' he said, "O God, here I gaze in sorrow and catastrophe (*karb wa-balā*), for here our blood will be spilt, here is the place of our battle, I know of this place from my grandfather."[24] Jesus also knew the time and manner of his death in advance, and even told his disciples so: "Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified."[25]

Before his death Jesus asked the women of Jerusalem not to weep for him and not to lament over him when he died.[26] Likewise, before Ḥusayn departed for the final battle at Karbalā' he asked his wives and sisters not to weep for him, nor to tear their clothes, nor to cut their cheeks in mourning after his death.[27]

After the hour of his death was made known to him, Jesus went out alone and prayed. He asked God to diminish the burden of his punishment: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: neverthe-

[21] Al-Tustarī 1995, p. 35.
[22] For details, see Kohlberg 1987a, p. 15; Rubin 1975, pp. 62–119.
[23] For details see: Sindawi 2000, pp. 323–24; For more detail, see, for example: Al-Ṭabarī 1992, pp. 231, 306.
[24] Abū Mikhnaf 1971, p.77.
[25] Matthew 26:2.
[26] Luke 23:28.
[27] Abū Mikhnaf 1971, p. 13–15.

less not as I will, but as thou wilt."[28] The night before his murder, when he knew that the time of his death was approaching, Ḥusayn also prayed the well-known prayer *Salāt al-Khawf* (prayer in time of trouble).

Ḥusayn also knew exactly who would kill him: at the end of the Battle of Karbalā' between Ḥusayn and Umayyad army, when Shimir ibn dhī al-Jawshan approached him in order to decapitate him, Ḥusayn requested that he "remove the disguise from his face so that I and see it and look at you." Shimir consented to Ḥusayn's request and removed the disguise, and his face appeared leprous and his eyes blind, with the chin of a dog and the hair of a pig. Then Ḥusayn said, "My grandfather was right and spoke the truth when he told my father, 'O 'Alī, this son will be killed by a leprous and blind man with the chin of a dog and the hair of a pig.'"[29]

Like him, Jesus knew with certainty who would betray him and the man's description:

"Verily I say unto you that one of you shall betray me … Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said."[30] Later, when the Greeks approached to arrest Jesus, he said to his disciples, "Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.[31]

It should be noted that premonition does not lead either Jesus or Ḥusayn to try to avoid their respective fates. On the contrary: when Ḥusayn concludes that his life is about to end he behaves accordingly and ignores the advice of his comrades and supporters suggesting that he not go to Iraq. He takes his death upon himself.

Similarly, during the last supper Jesus declares to his disciples that he is about to sacrifice himself for the sake of the victory of faith, and that he will die in order to save mankind. They both willingly took upon themselves the role of sacrificial victim and their death as salvation for mankind.

The Manner of Death

Jesus' belief in himself as a redeemer and savior did not help him on the day of his death. When Jesus was arrested by his enemies they bound him, and one of the people rose and jeered at him, saying, If you are really Jesus, then save yourself.[32] The same thing happened to Ḥusayn when Shimir came to cut off his head.[33]

[28] Matthew 26:39, 42.
[29] Abū Mikhnaf 1971, p. 95.
[30] Matthew 26:21–25.
[31] *Ibid.*, v. 45. This verse is repeated in Mark 14:42.
[32] Matthew 27:40.
[33] Abū Mikhnaf 1971, p. 94.

When Jesus was trapped and in distress among his enemies, he said "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?"[34] It is likewise written that Ḥusayn could have defeated his enemies had he wanted to, but he chose martyrdom.

There are more similarities: Jesus and Ḥusayn were both killed on Fridays; both were stabbed when they died.[35] The New Testament tells that the priests promised Judas Iscariot a sum of 30 pieces of silver to betray Jesus and hand him over to them.[36] The *Maqātil* tells that Caliph Yazīd promised *badra* [10,000 dirhams] to whoever would bring him Ḥusayn's head.

The deaths of the two were unusual. Regarding Ḥusayn special importance is attributed to the fact that he was killed on ʿĀshūrā' Day, the 10th day of the month of Muḥarram, and some traditions claim that he was born on the same day, contradicting the historical record. Not by chance was Ḥusayn murdered on that day. On ʿĀshūrā' Day many fateful events took place: God created the heavens, the royal throne, and the stars; He created man, father Abraham was born; Noah's ark landed on Mt. Arrarat (al-Jūdī); He split the sea before Moses and the Children of Israel passed through on dry ground, Jonah (Yūnis) emerged from the belly of the whale, and ʿĀshūrā' Day will be the Day of Judgement and resurrection of the dead.

According to Shīʿite belief Jesus was born, and ascended to heaven, on ʿĀshūrā' Day.[37]

If we examine the above events as if they took place on ʿĀshūrā' Day, even if this is not so historically, we will see that most involved prophets or disciples, and are connected with deliverance from adversity. The births and deaths of the two thus occurred on a most momentous day for the world.

A unique motif worthy of mention in the manner of their deaths is that of thirst. Both Jesus and Ḥusayn were thirsty when they died. The motif of Ḥusayn's and his followers' thirst is repeated a number of times in *Maqātil* literature, and describes the acute need of Ḥusayn and his family to drink from the Euphrates River at the time of the Battle of Karbalā'.

The reason for the intense thirst is in the historical record: the governor of Kūfa and Baṣra, ʿUbaydallāh Ibn Ziyād, ordered his men to prevent Ḥusayn, his family and subjects from approaching the Euphrates River. For this purpose two army units were ordered to block the approaches to the

[34] Matthew 26:53.

[35] Mark 15:42–43. See also: Al-Majlisī 1983, 44:199, John 19:34; Ibn Namā 1899, pp. 69–70.

[36] *Ibid.,* Matthew 26:14–16.

[37] ʾAkhṭab Khawārizim 1948, p. 3–4.

Euphrates and the canals carrying water from it. When Ḥusayn's and his people's thirst became agonizing, Ḥusayn made a pleading speech recounting his family's virtues and merits, especially those of his grandfather the prophet Muḥammad, but to no avail.

When Ḥusayn's son ʿAlī, who was fighting at his side, spoke of his great thirst, his father replied, "How it grieves me that I cannot help you … In a short while you will meet your grandfather the prophet Muḥammad in heaven, and he will quench your thirst with the most faithful cup, and you will sip from it and never thirst again.[38]

Before his soul left his body, Ḥusayn asked his murderer, "If you must kill me, permit me to drink a sip of water." His murder refused and mocked him, saying, "In a few minutes you will taste death, sip after sip."[39]

Another warrior of ʿUmar Ibn Saʿd's army, ʿAbdallāh Ibn al-Ḥusayn al-ʾAzdī, scornfully mocked Ḥusayn's plea to drink: "O son of ʾAbū Turāb,[40] do you not claim that your father ʿAlī is in charge of the al-Ḥawḍ spring in Paradise? He will quench the thirst of those who love him; be patient, and in a short time, when you die, your father will give you water from the spring in Paradise."[41]

It is noteworthy that Ḥusayn's father ʿAlī knew that in the future his son would die at Karbalāʾ, that he would die thirsty, that after his death he would reach Paradise and drink one sip from the spring in Paradise – and never thirst again forever.[42]

These words recall Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman, in which Jesus said that he who drinks from its water will never thirst again: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."[43]

Moreover, the New Testament stresses that Jesus gave up his spirit while he was thirsty. In fact, thirst brought his death more quickly: "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a spunge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to

[38] Ibn Namā 1899, pp. 63–64.

[39] Abū Mikhnaf 1971, p. 94.

[40] ʾAbū Turāb is another name for ʿAlī Ibn ʾAbū Ṭālib. For details about this name see: Kohlberg 1978b, pp. 347–352. The article was reprinted in the Kohlberg 1996, Chap. 6.

[41] On the al-Ḥawḍ spring in Paradise, see: Abū Mikhnaf 1971, p. 95; ʾAkhṭab Khawārizim 1948, p. 36; Ibn Ḥanbal, n.d, 3:102, 230.

[42] Abū Mikhnaf 1971, p. 99.

[43] John 4:13–14.

his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed is head and gave up the ghost."[44]

Thus we see that Ḥusayn, like Jesus, will quench his thirst in heaven. Jesus will drink from the eternal cup, while Ḥusayn will drink from spring in Paradise.

An additional noteworthy motif for comparison is the division of the clothing.

After Jesus' death, his killers divided his clothes among them. The soldiers who crucified Jesus took his clothes and divided them four ways, with one portion for each soldier. They also took the coat, but when they saw that it was made of one piece without a seam, "they said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did."[45]

Likewise, when Ḥusayn was killed his killers divided his clothes and cast lots for his belongings.[46] This is an outstanding example of the Shīʿite authors attributing to Ḥusayn elements from Jesus' biography in order to make him resemble a holy personality as much as possible.

After Death

After saints' death, heaven and earth themselves mourn together with the forces of nature. This is a characteristic motif appearing frequently in folk legends. Here, when Jesus dies nature is shocked and darkness spread over the face of the entire earth: "And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose."[47]

Maqātil literature mentions many similar natural phenomena taking place after Ḥusayn's death. The earth quaked and trembled, and the mountains began to collapse.[48] Extraordinary events took place in the heavens as well, and blood rained down. Many traditions describe the sky turning

[44] John 19:28–30; Matthew 27:48.

[45] John 19:23–24 according to Psalms 22:18.

See also: Ibn Ṭawūs 1950, pp. 68–72; ʾAkhṭab Khawārizim 1948, p. 37; Ibn Namā 1899, p. 40; Al-Ṭabarī 1991, 3:334.

[46] Ibn Shahrāshūb 1991, 4: 120–121.

[47] Luke 23:44–45; Matthew 27:51–52.

[48] Abū Mikhnaf 1971, p. 95; Ibn Ṭawūs 1950, p. 115; Ibn Namā 1899, p. 62.

dark, the sun eclipsed, stars appearing in the sky during the day, and the moon also eclipsed the same night.[49]

God himself mourns the enormity of the catastrophe of the death of the two. So great is God's grief over the evil of men who killed his chosen ones that he brings the forces of nature into action in his mourning and changes natural laws to evince his sorrow.

As God's chosen, Jesus and Ḥusayn are very close to God and dwell at His right hand. It is said of Jesus: "So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God."[50] Likewise, the Shīʿites believe that Ḥusayn dwells in heaven at the right side of God's throne.[51]

Another important element in comparing the two is the belief that both of them will be resurrected and will return to redeem their people.

Jesus' body was not found in his tomb. When Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome came to anoint his body with spices they saw that the grave was open and a young man dressed in white was sitting in it. "And he said to them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him."[52] Jesus died on Friday and was resurrected three days later, on Sunday. He remained on earth 40 days and afterwards ascended to heaven and sat at the right hand of God.[53] Sources tell that after Ḥusayn's death his body was carried to the fifth firmament; afterwards he was returned to the ground of Karbalā' and remained there unburied for three days.[54]

According to Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, Ḥusaynʿs soul left his body and God raised it to Him from his enemies, lest they kill him as had been done to Jesus. Even when Ḥusayn departed for Iraq, God hid within him; and at every spot where Ḥusayn camped on his way the angel Gabriel came to him and spoke to him. Ḥusayn called to the angel Gabriel and asked him, Who am I? Gabriel answered him, You are God, of Whom there is none other living and enduring, Who takes life and resurrects; You are He Who commands heaven and earth and they obey You.[55]

Moreover, claims Jaʿfar, the murderers' hands did not touch even one of the saints. Even the emir of the faithful ʿAlī the father Ḥusayn was not

[49] Ibn Ṭāwūs 1950, p. 66; Ibn Namā 1899, p. 36.
[50] Mark 16:19.
[51] Ibn Qūlawayh 1937, p. 47.
[52] Mark 16:6.
[53] Mark 16:19.
[54] Al-Tustarī 1995, p. 37.
[55] Al-Juʿfaī 1978, p.96.

murdered by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn Muljam in 661; rather, God carried him to heaven. Thus no Shīʿite ʾimām really dies; God takes them to heaven, just as they did not lay a hand on Jesus (the prophet ʿĪsā).

To summarise, we can conclude the following:

Similarities

- Ḥusayn and Jesus were both born miraculously, of virgins.
- Both were chosen, endowed with inborn abilities and were able to work miracles and to save in time of trouble.
- Both knew the hour of their deaths in advance, and despite this,
- they accepted their deaths in order to redeem mankind.

Differences

- In the New Testament that fact that Jesus is the son of God is stressed repeatedly, while Ḥusayn appears in the sources as a prophet. The identities of his parents and grandparents are known.
- Jesus was begotten by the holy spirit, while Ḥusayn was born of natural parents.
- Jesus was an only child and also the only one in his generation (founder of a dynasty), while Ḥusayn was the offspring of a family of saints (continuation of a dynasty).
- Jesus was resurrected immediately after his death – his body was not found in his grave. Though some believe that Ḥusayn was taken to heaven, there are no dependable sources for this. The more common belief is that he will be resurrected in time.
- Jesus is above any king or messiah, which is not said of Ḥusayn!

The similarities are greater that the differences between these points; in the personalities of the two, their biographies and their deaths. Both Ḥusayn and Jesus sacrificed their lives for the sake of their principles. God put trials before both Ḥusayn and Jesus, and the two are similar in their endurance of the misfortunes placed before them, their unwavering faith, and their tragic ends.

Jesus declared to his disciples that he is about the sacrifice himself for the sake of the victory of the faith. He saw himself as the redeemer of mankind. Likewise Ḥusayn made a similar declaration to his supporters; he also saw himself as a redeemer and sacrificed himself for the Shīʿite faith. He knew that his death, and the tragic manner in which he would be killed, would

bring about the consolidation of the sect and awakening of the Shīʿite believers.

Both became great leaders of their people while they lived, but even more for future generations: Ḥusayn became the founder of the Shīʿite faction in Islam and is considered a saint; and Jesus founded the Christian faith and became a savior and redeemer for the new Christians.

Bibliography

Akhṭab Khawārizim, M.
1948 *Maqtal al- Ḥusayn*. Najaf: Maṭbaʿat al-Zahrā'.

Amir-Moezzi, M.
1994 *The Divine Guide in Early Shīʿism, the Sources of Esotericism in Islam*, translated by David Streight. New-York: State University of New York Press, Albany.

Ayoub, M.
1978 *Redemptive Suffering in Islam, A Study of the Devotional Aspects of 'Āshūrā' in Twelver Shīʿism*. New York: Mouton Publishers, The Hague.

Boyer, R.
1988 *An Attempt to Define the Typology of Medieval Hagiography – A Symposium*. Odense: Odense University Press.

Campbell, J.
1956 *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. New York: Meridian Books.

(Ibn) Ḥanbal, A.
No date *Musnad al-'Imām 'Aḥmad*. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir.

Al-Juʿfaī, M.
1978 *Al-Haft al-Sharīf min Faḍa'il Mawlāna Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq*, 2nd ed, edited by Muṣṭafā Ghalib. Beirut: Dār al-Andalus.

Klausner, J.
1999 *Yeshu HaNotzri v'Tkufato* (Hebrew: Jesus Christ and his Times). Jerusalem: Ariel.

Kohlberg, E
1987a "HaShīʿa, Siato shel ʿAlī," (Hebrew, "The Shīʿa, the Faction of ʿAlī"), in *Protest and Revolution in Shīʿite Islam*, ed. Martin Kramer. 2nd ed,Tel Aviv: Hotza'at HaKibbutz HaMeuchad.

Kohlberg, E.
1987b "'Abū Turāb," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 49: 347-352.

Kohlberg, E.
1996 *Belief and Law in Imāmī Shīʿism*. Aldershot, Hampshir: Variorum.

Al- Majlisī, M.
1983 *Biḥār al-ʾAwār*. 2nd ed. Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Wafāʾ.

Al-Masʿūdī, A.
1954 *ʾIthbāt al-waṣiyya lilʾimām ʿAlī Ibn ʾAbū Ṭālib*. 4th ed. Najaf:al-Maṭbaʿat al-Ḥaydariyya.

(ʾAbū) Mikhnaf, L.
1971 *Maqtal al-Ḥusayn ʿAlayhi al-Salām*. ed. ʿUmar ʿAbū al-Naṣr, Beirut: Dār ʿUmar ʾAbū al-Naṣr.

(Ibn) Namā, M.
1899 *Muthīr al-ʾAḥzān wamunīr Subul al-ʾAshjān*. Qumm:Madrasat al-Imām al-Mahdī, 1899.

(Ibn) Qūlawayh, J.
1937 *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*. edited by Mirza Abdallāh al-Ḥusayn al-Amīnī al-Tabrīzī, Najaf: al-Maṭbaʿa Murtaḍawiyya.

Rubin, U.
1975 "Pre-existence and Light; Aspects of the Concept Nūr Muḥammad," *Israel Oriental Studies*, 5: 62-119.

Shaddai, Y.
2000 *HaMokesh HaNotzri* (Hebrew, "The Christian Trap"). Tel Aviv: Yediot Acharonot, Chemed.

(Ibn) Shahrāshub, M.
1991 *Manāqib ʾāl ʾAbī Ṭālib*. edited by Yūsuf Biqāʿī, Beirut: Dār al-ʾAḍwā.

Sindawi, K.
2000 The "*Maqātil* in Shīʿite Literature," an unpublished PhD. thesis (in Hebrew). Ramat-Gan: Bar- Ilan University.

Al-Ṭabarī, M.
1991 *Tārīkh al-ʾUmam wa-al-Mulūk*. 3rd ed., Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʾIlmiyya.

1992 *Dalāʾil al-ʾImāma*. edited by Dept. of Islamic Studies, Qumm: al-Biʿtha Institute.

(Ibn) Ṭāwūs, A.
1950 *al-Lahūf ʿalā qatlā al-Ṭufūf*. Najaf: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Ḥaydariyya.

Al-Ṭustarī, J.
1994 *al-Khaṣāʾiṣ al-Ḥusayniyya*. 1st ed,edited by Jaʿfar al-Ḥusaynī, Beirut: Dār al-Surūr.